"He was Caesar and Pope in one; but he was Pope without Pope's pretensions, Caesar without the legions of Caesar: without a standing army, without a bodyguard, without a palace, without a fixed revenue; if ever any man had the right to say that he ruled by the right divine, it was Mohammad, for he had all the power without its instruments and without its supports."

Bosworth Smifu, Mohammad and Mohammadanism, London 1874, p. 92.

Questions about Islam?

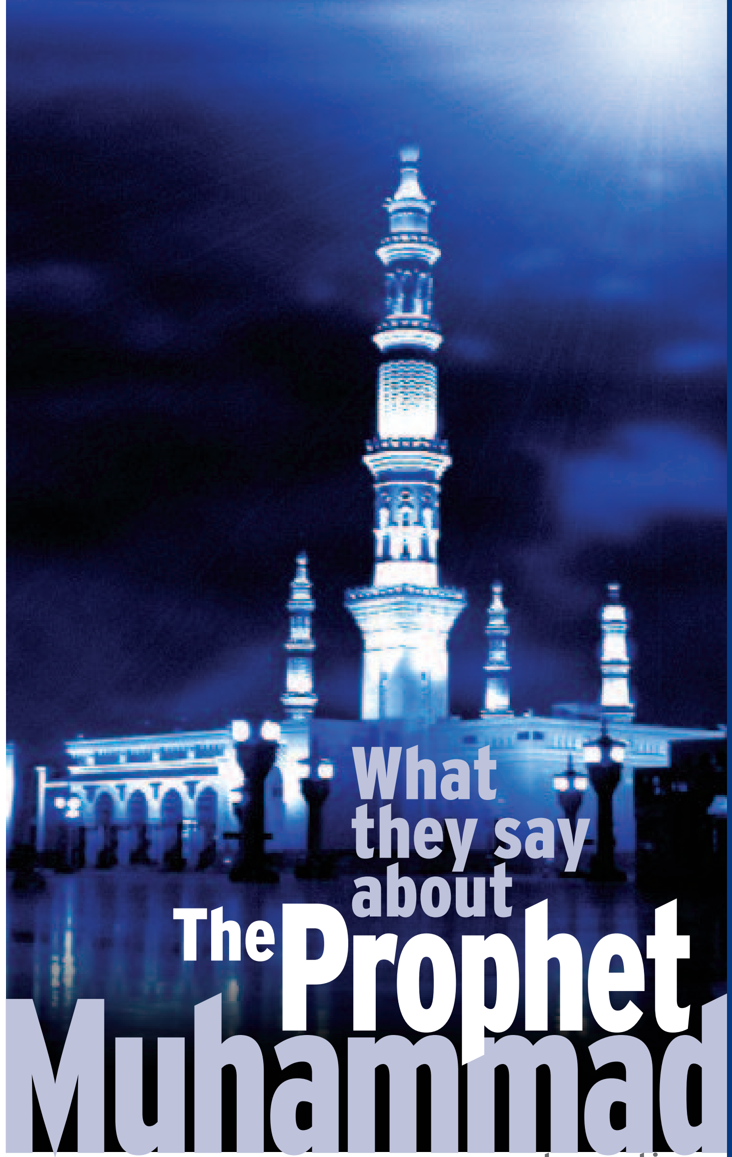
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In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

"...Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational dogmas, of a cult without images; the founder of twenty terrestrial empires and of one spiritual empire, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he?"

Lamartine, Histoire de la Turquie, Paris 1854

During the centuries of the crusades, all sorts of slanders were invented against the Prophet Muhammad (p)[1]. However, with the birth of the modern age, marked with religious tolerance and freedom of thought, there has been a great change in the approach of Western authors in their delineation of his life and character.

The West, however, has yet to go a step forward to discover the greatest reality about Muhammad (p); that is his being the true and the last Prophet of God for all humanity.

Despite all its objectivity and enlightenment, there has been no sincere and objective attempt by the West to understand the Prophethood of Muhammad (p). It is so strange that very glowing tributes are paid to him for his integrity and achievement but his claim of being the Prophet of God is rejected explicitly or implicitly. It is here that a searching of the heart is required, and a review of the so-called objectivity is needed. The following glaring facts from the life of Muhammad (p) have been furnished to facilitate an unbiased, logical and objective decision regarding his Prophethood.

Up to the age of forty, Muhammad (p) was not known as a statesman, a preacher or an orator. He was never seen discussing the principles of metaphysics, ethics, law, politics, economics or sociology. No doubt he possessed an excellent character and charming manners and was known to be highly cultured. Yet there was nothing so deeply striking and so radically extraordinary in him that would make men expect something great and revolutionary from him in the future. But when he came out of the Cave of Hira, with a new message, he was completely transformed. "Is it possible for a person known to possess an upright and unblemished character, to suddenly turn 'an impostor' and claim to be the Prophet of God?". It is well known that his claim invited the rage of his people, and marked the beginning of a long, arduous struggle.

One might ask: "for what reason did he suffer all those hardships?" His people offered to accept him as their King and to lay all the riches of the land at his feet if only he would leave the preaching of his message. But he turned down their alluring offers and continued to preach in the face of insults, social boycott and even physical assault. Furthermore, had he come with a design of rivalry with the Christians and the Jews, why should he have believed in Jesus Christ and Moses and other Prophets of God (peace be upon them), which is a basic requirement of faith without which no one could be a Muslim?

Muhammad: the final Prophet for Mankind

It is well known that Muhammad (p) was unlettered and had led a very uneventful life before he announced his mission to the world at the age of forty. Is it not an incontrovertible proof of his Prophethood, that despite being unlettered, all of Arabia stood in awe and wonder when he began preaching his message, and was bewitched by the wonderful eloquence of his message?

The whole legion of Arab poets, preachers and orators of the highest caliber failed to bring forth the equivalent of the Qur'an, which remains inimitable to this day. And above all, how could he then pronounce truths of scientific nature contained in the Qur'an that no human being could possibly have discovered at that time?

Last, but not the least, why did he lead a hard life even after gaining power and authority? The words he uttered while dying were: "We the community of the Prophets are not inherited. Whatever we leave is for charity." As a matter of fact, Muhammad (p), is the last link of Prophets sent in different lands and times since the beginning of the human life on earth.

"If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius, who could dare to compare any great man in modern history with Muhammad? The most famous men created arms, laws and empires only. They founded, if anything at all, no more than material powers which often crumbled away before their eyes. This man moved not only armies, legislations, empires, peoples and dynasties, but millions of men in one-third of the then inhabited world; and more than that, he moved the altars, the gods, the religions, the ideas, the beliefs and souls... His forbearance in victory, his ambition, which was entirely devoted to one idea and in no manner striving for an empire; his endless prayers, his mystic conversations with God, his death and his triumph after death; all these attest not to an impostor but to a firm conviction which gave him the power to restore a dogma. This dogma was twofold, the unity of God and the immateriality of God; the former telling what God is, the latter telling what God is not; the one overthrowing false gods with the sword, the other starting an idea with the words.

Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational dogmas, of a cult without images; the founder of twenty terrestrial empires and of one spiritual empire, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he?"

Lamartine, Histoire de la Turquie, Paris 1854, Vol. II, pp. 276-77.

"It is not the propagation but the permanency of his religion that deserves our wonder; the same pure and perfect impression that he engraved at Mecca and Medina is preserved, after the revolutions of twelve centuries by the Indian, the African and the Turkish proselytes of the Koran... The Mahometans have uniformly withstood the temptation of reducing the object of their faith and devotion to a level with the senses and imagination of man. 'I believe in One God and Mahomet the Apostle of God', is the simple and invariable profession of Islam. The intellectual image of the Deity has never been degraded by any visible idol; the honors of the prophet have never transgressed the measure of human virtue; and his living precepts have restrained the gratitude of his disciples within the bounds of reason and religion."

Edward Gibbon and Simon Ocklay, History of the Saracen Empire, London 1870, p. 54.

"It is impossible for anyone who studies the life and character of the great Prophet of Arabia, who knows how he taught and how he lived, to feel anything but reverence for that mighty Prophet, one of the great messengers of the Supreme. And although in what I put to you I shall say many things which may be familiar to many, yet I myself feel whenever I re-read them, a new way of admiration, a new sense of reverence for that mighty Arabian teacher."

Annie Besant, The Life and Teachings of Muhammad, Madras 1932, p.4.

"His readiness to undergo persecutions for his beliefs, the high moral character of the men who believed in him and looked up to him as leader, and the greatness of his ultimate achievement all argue his fundamental integrity. To suppose Muhammad an impostor raises more problems than it solves. Moreover, none of the great figures of history is so poorly appreciated in the West as Muhammad."

W. Montgomery, Mohammad at Mecca, Oxford, 1953, p. 52.

"Muhammad, the inspired man who founded Islam, was born about A.D. 570 into an Arabian tribe that worshiped idols. Orphaned at birth, he was always particularly solicitous of the poor and needy, the widow and the orphan, the slave and the downtrodden. At twenty he was already a successful businessman, and soon became director of camel caravans for a wealthy widow. When he reached twenty-five his employer, recognizing his merit, proposed marriage. Even though she was fifteen years older, he married her, and as long as she lived remained a devoted husband.

Like almost every major prophet before him, Muhammad fought shy of serving as the transmitter of God's word, sensing his own inadequacy. But the angel commanded 'Read'. So far as we know, Muhammad was unable to read or write, but he began to dictate those inspired words which would soon revolutionize a large segment of the earth; "There is one God".

In all things Muhammad was profoundly practical. When his beloved son Ibrahim died, an eclipse occurred, and rumors of God's personal condolence quickly arose. Whereupon Muhammad is said to have announced, 'An eclipse is a phenomenon of nature. It is foolish to attribute such things to the death or birth of a human being'.

At Muhammad's own death an attempt was made to deify him, but the man who was to become his administrative successor killed the hysteria with one of the noblest speeches in religious history: 'If there are any among you who worshiped Muhammad, he is dead. But if it is God you worshiped, He lives forever'."

James A. Michener, 'Islam The Misunderstood Religion', In the Reader's Digest (American Edition) for May 1955, pp. 68-70.

1. (p) here stands for "peace be upon him"